

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COTONO 01950 101308Z

67

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 EA-07 ACDA-07 /093 W

----- 076417

R 101000Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9134

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1950

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, DM

SUBJ: BENIN MARKS SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF MARXISM-LENINISM OPTION

SUMMARY: CONTRARY TO THE MANY RUMORS WHICH HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING IN COTONOU FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) DID NOT TAKE ANY EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES ON NOV 30, THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO ADOPT SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM. OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THIS MAY MARK REGIME'S INTENTION NOT TO PRESS AHEAD WITH EXCESSIVELY RADICAL MEASURES FOR TIME BEING. END SUMMARY.

1. CONTRARY TO RUMORS WHICH HAD BEEN CIRCULATING IN COTONOU DURING PERIOD PRIOR TO NOV 30 NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION, GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) ANNOUNCED NO MAJOR CHANGES EITHER IN NATURE OR ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESENT REGIME. BENINESE PRESIDENT KEREKOU LIMITED HIS REMARKS TO AN HOUR-LONG PRESENTATION OF BENIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE, DENUNCIATION OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED TO SABOTAGE THE REVOLUTION, AND A CALL TO THE PEOPLE TO REMEMBER THE HISTORIC DATES NOV 30, 1972 WHEN THE REGIME'S "DISCOURS
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PAGE 02 COTONO 01950 101308Z

PROGRAMME" WAS ANNOUNCED, 1974 WHEN THE COUNTRY OPTED FOR

MARXISM, AND 1975 WHEN DAHOMEY WAS RENAMED THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN. LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS HERE HAD FEARED THAT KEREKOU WOULD USE OCCASION TO ANNOUNCE BENIN'S DEPARTURE FROM THE FRANC ZONE. SIMILARLY THERE HAD BEEN RUMORS THAT THE CABINET WOULD BE SHUFFLED TO ALLOW GREATER CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF A RADICAL CIVILIAN PRIME MINISTER. THE FACT THAT NEITHER OF THESE PREDICTIONS WAS REALIZED SUGGESTS THAT (A) DESPITE IDEOLOGICAL RENTINGS ABOUT SELF RELIANCE, THERE IS STILL A SOUND ELEMENT OF PRAGMATISM REMAINING IN THE GOVERNMENT AND (B) THAT KEREKOU APPEARS TO BE CONTENT WITH PRESENT POWER STRUCTURE.

2. OCCASION WAS MARKED BY FOUR-HOUR PARADE OF MOST OF POPULATION OF COTONOU, WHICH HAD BEEN ORGANIZED INTO MARCHING GROUPS EXEMPLIFYING THEMES AS VARIED AS "MARXISM-LENINISM OUR GUIDE, SOCIALISM OUR WAY" TO "ONWARD WITH MINERAL WATERS AND ALCOHOL" (EN AVANT LES EUX MINERALS ET ALCOOLS), ONE OF THE MAJOR LOCAL INDUSTRIES. MILITARY PORTION OF PARADE NOT PARTICULARLY IMPRESSIVE WITH NO EVIDENCE OF NEW EQUIPMENT ON DISPLAY. NORTH KOREAN PHOTOGRAPHIC TEAMS, HOWEVER, GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO PARADE WHOSE FORMAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DEVISED BY N. KOREAN AND CHINESE ORGANIZERS.

3. ALL OF RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC GROUPS AND MAJORITY OF NON-RESIDENT DIPLOMATS WERE ON HAND FOR EVENTS. GUEST OF HONOR WAS GUINEA PRIME MINISTER BEAVOGUI TO WHOM SPECIAL ATTENTION WAS PAID BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU. ALSO IN THE PLACE OF HONOR WAS THE SAHAROU MINISTRE OF INFORMATION SALEM OULD SALEK. E. GERMAN AMBASSADOR KUENZEL (RESIDENT IN LAGOS) WAS PARTICULARLY CORDIAL VIS-A-VIS OTHER DIPLOMATS AND MADE SPECIAL EFFORT TO BE FRIENDLY WITH HIS W. GERMAN COUNTERPART.

4. MOST DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HERE HAVE INTERPRETED ABSENCE OF ANY NEW RADICAL MOVES TO MARK ANNIVERSARY AS SIGN THAT REGIME DOES NOT INTEND, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, TO ACCELERATE PACE OF REVOLUTION. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE MORE MODERATE MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU, SPECIFICALLY PRESIDENT KEREKOU AND FOREIGN MINISTER ALLADAYE, MAY HAVE BEEN AWARE OF PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER FOOD SHORTAGES AND HAD THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS NOT MOMENT TO TAKE ANY STEP WHICH MIGHT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 COTONO 01950 101308Z

GENERAL STANDARD OF LIVING. AS THE NATIONAL SLOGAN PROCLAIMS, LA LUTTE CONTINUE (THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES), BUT AT A MORE MODERATE PACE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SOCIALISM, ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976COTONO01950
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760457-0175
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761255/aaaabvnc.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENIN MARKS SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF MARXISM-LENINISM OPTION SUMMARY: CONTRARY TO THE MANY RUMORS WHICH HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING IN COTONOU FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THE GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, DM, (KEREKOU, MATHIEU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006